

**Statement**  
**of**  
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**before the**  
**Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Science**  
**and Technology**  
**Committee on Homeland Security**  
**United States House of Representatives**  
**April 25, 2006**  
**Washington, D.C.**

Chairman Reichert, Congressman Pascrell, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Tracy Henke, and I serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Grants and Training (G&T) within the Preparedness Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). It is my pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the current status of the Department's efforts to enhance state and local interoperable communications, and our coordination internal and external to the Department of Homeland Security.

I wanted to thank the Members of the Committee for your ongoing support of the Department. I also thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your foresight and leadership on the issue of interoperable communications, which is a cornerstone of our ability to save lives and protect property during threatened or actual emergencies and disasters including terrorist events.

Mr. Chairman, G&T is an essential element of the Department's capacity building efforts at the state, local, territorial, and tribal levels to deter, prevent, respond, and recover from emergencies and disasters of all kinds, including terrorism. DHS, through G&T, has worked with Federal agencies and state and local jurisdictions to develop and disseminate information to assist in making more informed preparedness decisions, including capability assessments, preparedness planning and strategies, and choices relating to training, technical assistance, equipment, and exercises.

G&T and its predecessor organization has provided assistance to all 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. territories. Through our programs and initiatives, more than 1.4 million emergency responders from more than 5,000 jurisdictions have been trained and conducted more than 500 exercises. By the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, states and localities will have received from DHS over \$17.9 billion in assistance and direct support since September 11, 2001. This includes specifically \$2.1 billion in grant assistance that states and local jurisdictions have obligated thus far to improve interoperability through the purchase of communications equipment and other projects.

The Department's three primary sources of financial assistance to states and local communities, the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program, and the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), require states and urban areas to assess their risk, capabilities, and needs, including requirements relating to interoperable communications. These assessments and strategies have given us valuable information on the current state of interoperable communications and how various states and localities are addressing this issue. While financial assistance is an important tool with which we support our state and local partners, the Department offers a wide array of support through technical assistance, training and exercise programs.

#### **INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS A PRIORITY UNDER HSPD-8**

As you will recall, Mr. Chairman, on December 17, 2003, the President issued "Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-8." Through HSPD-8, the President tasked the Department of Homeland Security, in coordination with other Federal departments, as well as state and local jurisdictions, to develop a National Preparedness

Goal to improve the delivery of Federal preparedness assistance to state and local jurisdictions, and strengthen the preparedness capabilities of Federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local governments.

Through the work that is being conducted under HSPD-8, the Department has developed an Interim National Preparedness Goal that establishes measurable readiness priorities and targets that appropriately balance the potential threat and magnitude of terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies with the resources required to prevent, respond to, and recover from them.

This effort is producing readiness metrics and elements that support the National Preparedness Goal, including standards for preparedness assessments and strategies, and a system for assessing the Nation's overall preparedness to respond to major events. The National Preparedness Goal focuses on seven national priorities, including "Strengthening Interoperable Communications Capabilities." This priority is meant to achieve interoperability not only in terms of communications, but also in the broad ability of systems and organizations to provide service and to accept service from one another across jurisdiction lines, enabling them to operate effectively together.

It should be noted as well that two recent Hurricane Katrina reports – one from Congress and the other from the White House – both mention the enhancement of public safety communications interoperability as a critical National priority. The Department is working to enhance Nationwide communications interoperability through a number of different programs and initiatives. I would like to take this opportunity to discuss these initiatives with the Subcommittee.

#### **INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ICTAP)**

In the area specific to my direction, G&T administers more than three dozen technical assistance programs. One of our most important technical assistance efforts to date is the Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP). ICTAP is designed to enhance interoperable communications among local, state, and Federal emergency responders and public safety officials, and is associated with the UASI grant program. The goal of the ICTAP program is to enable local public safety agencies to communicate as they prevent or respond to a weapons of mass destruction attack. ICTAP also leverages and works with other Federal, state, and local interoperability efforts whenever possible to enhance the overall capacity for agencies and individuals to communicate with one another. This program enables the jurisdictions to understand the scope of their interoperability needs, and implement solutions to address those needs.

ICTAP has received requests for assistance from 46 of the Department's 50 UASI partners, as well as 9 States and 5 U.S. Territories. In the past 4 years, \$37.9 million has been made available for ICTAP's efforts. All requests for ICTAP assistance are coordinated through the states to ensure consistency with state, and, where applicable, the urban area homeland security strategies. ICTAP provides technical assistance at no cost

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to jurisdictions in conjunction with the implementation of state and UASI preparedness strategies. This process streamlines the relationship between the requests for interoperability funding and the need for technical assistance and training to ensure it is used effectively. In the context of ICTAP's work, it is essential that we neither duplicate nor contradict any other Federal, state or local interoperability initiatives. In conjunction with our Federal partners, we have striven to present a coordinated approach. The current listing of the states, regions and territories in which we are working is attached to my testimony in Appendix A.

While the ICTAP program has provided significant assistance and support to a number of urban areas and states, it is important to note that there are no "silver-bullet solutions" that we can "drop-off" in a region that will resolve its problems. From start to finish, interoperability requires a great deal of work and coordination with the key communication stakeholders in that region.

### **TACTICAL INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATION PLANS**

As part of the FY 2005 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) each of the Department's 50 UASI partners was required to develop a Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP). States and territories that did not have a designated urban area were required through grant guidance to designate a multi-jurisdictional metropolitan area or region as a substitute. There are now a total of 75 urban areas and multi-jurisdictional metropolitan areas that are required to submit a TICP. This initiative builds on an effort led by SAFECOM and G&T in FY 2004 called RapidCom that focused on achieving tactical-level emergency interoperable communications in ten major urban areas. States are required to submit the TICPs to G&T by May 1, 2006, for review and approval.

Tactical interoperable communications is defined as the rapid provision of on-scene, incident based mission critical voice communications among first-responder agencies (EMS, fire, and law enforcement), as appropriate for the incident, and in support of incident command system as defined in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Each TICP has six critical elements:

- (1) Urban Area Information – A basic description of the urban/metropolitan area and its efforts to address interoperable communications. A list off all agencies represented in the TICP including those agencies represented in the Urban Area Working Group
- (2) Governance Structure – An overview of the governance structure including the contact information for the members of the governing body
- (3) Interoperable Equipment – A detailed listing of all interoperable communication equipment available in the urban/metropolitan area
- (4) Policies and Procedures – Specific information on how urban/metropolitan areas will utilize their communications equipment and adhere to proper protocol
- (5) Incident response plan – A detailed listing of functional disciplines to which the TICP applies, and plans for how the available interoperable communications equipment will be used within the NIMS structure to support the response to the incident.

- (6) Training – Information on the progress and future plans to ensure that adequate staff are training as communications unit leaders as defined by NIMS

The objective is for each Urban Area to have plan that will allow them to achieve command level interoperability within one hour of the incident. Within 6 months of submitting their TICPs, G&T will provide, if requested, direct assistance to the 75 identified areas to validate the plans by conducting a full scale exercise. The exercise will be evaluated by a team of subject matter experts and will utilize exercise evaluation guidelines that are consistent with previously identified target capabilities to improve interoperable communications. At the conclusion of the exercise, an after action report (AAR) for each of the 75 identified areas will be created to clearly present any issues the public safety community must address, including recommendations to achieve meaningful communication interoperability. Included in the AAR, as an appendix, will be an improvement plan that will document specific steps the region can take to improve their interoperability. Meanwhile, the Science and Technology Directorate Office of Interoperability and Compatibility is in the process of conducting a Nationwide Baseline Survey to measure the capabilities necessary for first responder agencies to achieve communications interoperability. Through the TICP exercise, the subsequent AAR process, and Nationwide Baseline Survey, the Department can identify shortfalls, and work with our state and local partners to fill communication gaps and focus resources for where they are needed the most to improve communication interoperability. This effort should drive state's FY 2007 investments related to interoperability.

### **DHS COORDINATION**

As we are all aware, there are a number of different activities both within DHS, as well as in other departments that involve interoperable communications issues. The range of activities includes research, development and testing of interoperability solutions; defining industry standards; conducting nationwide baseline surveys; designing long term national interoperability strategies; and operational delivery of systems and training and technical assistance. We work hard to closely coordinate these efforts.

### **SAFECOM**

The Department is well aware of the importance of developing national interoperability policy. For guidance on these issues, G&T relies on SAFECOM, which is the Federal government's umbrella office for coordination of public safety interoperability programs, to provide standards and conduct research that can help our jurisdictions develop a better interoperable communications program. As an example, all FY 2006 guidance for G&T grant programs that provide eligibility for spending on communications interoperability requires compliance with the SAFECOM grant guidance on interoperability. In addition, ICTAP is examining how to incorporate the findings from the recently developed SAFECOM Statement of Requirements (SoR) for Wireless Public Safety Communications and Interoperability. The SoR contains interoperability scenarios describing how SAFECOM envisions technology enhancing public safety. In addition, we have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with SAFECOM to codify the areas in which we can work more effectively together. This includes continuation of grant

support for SAFECOM projects like the Statewide Communication Interoperable Planning methodology, as well as coordinating other areas of mutual interest such as the dissemination of grant guidance and providing technical assistance in the field. SAFECOM has also recently allocated resources to support the development and subsequent exercise validation of the TICP. SAFECOM will soon distribute a national survey to assess the baseline communications capabilities of thousands of state and local public safety agencies. We look forward to combining these results with the results of the TICP process to gain a more detailed picture of interoperability capabilities.

### ***NIMS Integration Center***

The NIMS is a nationwide approach for all levels of government to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for and respond to domestic incidents. Together with SAFECOM, the NIMS Integration Center (NIC) is currently developing the Communications Unit Leader (COML) training course referenced in FY 05 HSGP Guidance for the TICP. ICTAP assisted the NIC in developing the core competencies for the COML that will be used as part of the certification requirements. When completed, the COML will be integrated into existing DHS training programs.

### **INTERAGENCY COORDINATION**

#### ***Federal Interagency Coordination Council (FICC)***

G&T, is represented on the Federal Interagency Coordination Council (FICC) addressing interoperability. The FICC, which is chaired by SAFECOM, seeks to avoid duplication, promote best practices and coordinate Federal grants and technical assistance among the Federal agencies supporting public safety interoperable wireless communications improvements.

#### ***Coordination with the Department of Justice***

In coordinating with the Department of Justice (DOJ) on interoperability initiatives, the Department through G&T has ensured that response agencies have incorporated this work into their homeland security interoperability efforts. For example, ICTAP has worked closely with personnel from DOJ's Integrated Wireless Network, Wireless Management Office- 25 Cities Program, National Institute of Justice- CommTech Program, and Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)- Interoperable Communications Technology Program to ensure that ongoing Federal efforts are closely coordinated.

#### ***Federal Partnership for Interoperable Communications (FPIC)***

We also participate in Federal Partnership for Interoperable Communications (FPIC) meetings. FPIC's goal is to foster partnerships among Federal agencies that promote the exchange of knowledge and resources among members of the wireless communications community. This participation assists in the creation and maintenance of a Federal roadmap to achieve wireless communications interoperability across Federal departments, bureaus, and agencies.

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### ***National Telecommunications and Information Administration***

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), located within the Department of Commerce, received a significant source of funding for interoperable communications grants to states and localities through the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-171). Under provisions of the bill, the Assistant Secretary of NTIA is authorized to use \$1 billion from the Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Fund to carry out a grant program to assist public safety agencies in the acquisition of, deployment of, or training for the use of interoperable communications systems that utilize, or enable interoperability with systems that can utilize, reallocated public safety spectrum for radio communications. The Department of Homeland Security is working closely with NTIA to ensure that any grants provided under this program are consistent with the approach taken by G&T and the SAFECOM initiatives. Further, DHS is committed to working with NTIA to ensure that these funds are spent in a manner that will have a meaningful impact on the state of communications interoperability.

### **CONCLUSION**

In closing, thank you for convening this hearing on the vital issue of communications interoperability. The Department of Homeland Security is committed to working with Congress and our stakeholders to continue to address this critical area of need. It is a cornerstone effort to enhancing our Nation's preparedness. Mr. Chairman, let me reinforce the Department of Homeland Security's continuing commitment to support the Nation's state, local, tribal, and territorial partners to ensure that America's emergency responders have the ability to effectively communicate before, during, and after a crisis. This concludes my prepared statement. I am happy to respond to any questions that you and the members of the Committee may have. Thank you.

Appendix A: States and UASI Sites Receiving Support Under the Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Programs

Active UASI ICTAP Sites		Pending UASI ICTAP Sites	ICTAP States	ICTAP U.S. Territories
Anaheim, CA	Orlando, FL	Long Beach, CA	California	Guam
Atlanta, GA	Philadelphia, PA	Alabama	Connecticut	Northern Mariana Islands
Baton Rouge, LA	Phoenix, AZ	Baltimore, MD	Hawaii	Puerto Rico
Buffalo, NY	Pittsburg, PA	South Carolina	Idaho	Virgin Islands
Charlotte, NC	Portland, OR	Iowa	Kentucky	
Chicago, IL	San Antonio, TX	Utah	Louisiana	
Cincinnati, OH	San Diego, CA	Montana	New York	
Cleveland, OH	San Francisco, CA	Wyoming	New Jersey	
Columbus, OH	San Jose, CA	Boston, MA	Washington	
Dallas/Ft. Worth/Arlington, TX	Santa Ana, CA	Rhode Island		
Denver, CO	Seattle, WA	Sacramento, CA		
Detroit, MI	St. Louis, MO	American Samoa		
Fresno, CA	Tampa, FL			
Honolulu, HI	Toledo, OH			
Houston, TX	Twin Cities, MN			
Indianapolis, IN	Washington, DC			
Jacksonville, FL	Alaska			
Kansas City, MO	Arkansas			
Las Vegas, NV	Delaware			
Los Angeles, CA	Kansas			
Louisville, KY	Maine			
Miami, FL	Mississippi			
Milwaukee, WI	North Dakota			
New Haven, CT	New Hampshire			
New Orleans, LA	New Mexico			
New York City, NY	South Dakota			
Oakland, CA	Tennessee			
Oklahoma City, OK	Vermont			
Omaha, NE	West Virginia			